



DIVERSITY@WORK

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

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<<http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/dwn.htm>>

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005

Q&A: VHA FACES THE FUTURE

Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin, Acting Under Secretary for Health, shares his thoughts on diversity in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

Q: How important is diversity in VA's health care system, currently serving more than 5.1 million veterans and 7.6 million enrollees throughout the United States and its territories?

Dr. Perlin: We simply cannot function as a Department without a broad and rich mix of cultures, ethnicities, generations and genders at all levels of the organization. Diversity factors into every element of the service we provide to veterans. It is one of the most critical issues we must address. We must build a workforce with a broader appreciation for and a greater sensitivity to cultural and ethnic differences among veterans. Our workforce must reflect the veteran population and the community that it serves. Attention to diversity is critical to health care outcomes for veterans and to the success of our Department's mission. This approach makes diversity a local as well as a national priority and provides an incentive for our networks and medical centers to strengthen their diversity programs.

CELEBRATE!

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, Birthday and Black History Month

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, 76th birthday anniversary, observed as a Federal holiday on January 17, 2005, and Black History Month, observed in February.

Each year, on the third Monday of January, the Federal government honors the birth of Dr. King. This year, the National theme for Dr. King's birthday observance is "Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On, Not A Day Off!"

The month of February is designated



Addressing these issues now is not only the right thing to do—it is the ONLY way VHA will be ready to face the future.

Currently, the two most underrepresented groups in VA are white and His-

panic women. In addition, only three employees of Asian descent now serve in the Senior Executive Service.

We are also faced with the problem that more than 50 percent of VA's SES employees are eligible to retire in 2005. This presents a challenge, but it also presents an opportunity to continue our emphasis on developing a more diverse senior leadership in the next few years. We have already begun this effort by increasing the number of women in senior roles in VHA over the last 3–5 years.

What we do or don't do today will affect VA and the veterans we are privileged to serve for decades to come. (*Interview continued on page 3.*)■

Black History Month, originally established as Negro History Month in 1926. This observance celebrates the accomplishments that African Americans have made to the Nation. The 2005 Black History Month theme is "The Niagara Movement: Black Protest Reborn, 1905–2005."

Overall, employment of African Americans at VA was 24 percent, with a total of 6,167 gains, in FY 2004. For more information, contact Wanda Jones, National Manager, VA's Black Special Emphasis Program, at wanda.jones@va.gov.■

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BOOKMARKS

- ▶ **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu>
- ▶ **National Center on Workforce and Disability (NCWD)**
<http://www.onestops.htm>
- ▶ **National Women's Health Information Center**
<http://www.4women.gov>
- ▶ **North American Iroquois Veterans Association (NAIVA)**
<http://www.naiva.homestead.com>
- ▶ **Office of Personnel Management (OPM) New Hiring Procedures for People with Disabilities**
<http://www.opm.gov/viewDocument.aspx?q=737>
- ▶ **United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI)**
<http://www.ushli.htm>
- ▶ **VA Veteran Data and Information**
<http://www.va.gov/vetdata/index.htm>



FIELD NOTES

News You Can Use

To join *NewsLink*, our free, weekly electronic news service, send an e-mail to dmeeo@mail.va.gov with SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line. Thanks to our *NewsLink* content partners:

- *Asian Diversity Magazine*
- *Black MBA Magazine*
- *Business & Legal Reports*
- *DiversityCareers.com*
- *Federal Employees News*
- *FedNews Online*
- *FindLaw*
- *Government Executive*
- *Government Procurement*
- *HireDiversity.com*
- *Hispanic Business*
- *HR Executive Magazine*
- *Indian Country Today*
- *Journal of Issues in Nursing*
- *Linkage, Inc.*
- *National Org. on Disability*
- *Newsweek*
- *National Public Radio*
- *Pew Hispanic Center*
- *SHRM*
- *The Access Board*
- *Training Media Review*
- *USAToday.com*
- *Washingtonpost.com*
- *Workforce Magazine*
- *Workindex.com*

Section 508 Accessibility T&TC

The Section 508 Accessibility Testing and Training Center (T&TC) is an ergonomically designed working environment located on the C-Level in the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office (VACO). The T&TC uses advanced testing solutions to ensure that all electronic and information technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities as required by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Section 508 Accessibility T&TC is open and accessible (by appointment only) to all VA employees. To learn more about the T&TC and Section 508, contact Patrick Sheehan, Section 508 coordinator, at Section508@mail.va.gov or (202) 273-6543.

MD-715 Update

VA has been the Federal leader in automating workforce data tables and program plans required by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Management Directive 715 (MD-715) under Title VII and the Rehabilitation Act. VA has automated all of the required data tables as well as the Facility Self Assessment, the Plan to Eliminate Barriers, and the Plan to Attain the Essential Elements of a Model EEO Program. All of these are available on the VISN Support Service Center (VSSC) Web site at <http://vssc.med.va.gov>. For further

assistance in conducting workforce analysis compliant with MD-715 or for a demonstration of VSSC, contact Mike Dole, Director, Workforce Analysis and Evaluation, at (202) 501-1975.

Farewell to Angela Burris

Presidential Management Fellow and U.S. Army veteran, Angela Burris served as the National Program Manager for People with Disabilities and for Native Americans. Ms. Burris transferred to the Social Security Administration where she will complete her fellowship.

Best wishes to Ms. Burris!

New Faces at DM&EEO

Brent Bailey—a retired Air Force officer with 20 years of varied experience in human resources, equal opportunity, information management, training, and protocol—currently serves as DM&EEO's Staff Assistant.

Michael Morgan previously worked as a mathematical statistician and a technical writer and editor for the U.S. Census Bureau. After a year-long sabbatical—during which he earned a certificate in teaching English as a foreign language—Mr. Morgan joined the DM&EEO staff as a writer and editor.

Welcome new DM&EEO employees!■



For special observance theme information, visit our Web site and select the Calendar link.

WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

<http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory>

Content: The Behring Center at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History opened the exhibit "The Price of Freedom: Americans at War" on Veterans Day, November 11, 2004. This 18,600 square foot permanent display surveys the history of America's military from the colonial era to present day. The Web site presents in-depth information about the exhibition and all of the objects on display.

Must-see feature: The Collection Search features all of the artifacts on display at the exhibit and allows guests to search for artifacts by conflict, category, or key word.

Contact info: Smithsonian Visitor Information, 14th Street & Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001, (202) 633-1000

Accessibility: No information is offered.■

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Respect in the Workplace

What do a toothpick, a key, a compass, and a stick of Double Mint gum have in common?

Each of these items are contained in the Diversity Took Kit distributed to participants in the “Respect in the Workplace” prototype initiated by the Diversity Management/Equal Employment Opportunity (DM/EEO) Program at the VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System (GCVHCS) in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Respect in the Workplace was implemented to address the facility’s initiative to “establish a multi-faceted program to foster respect in the workplace and resolve disputes at the earliest opportunity.” This training is designed to remind employees to recognize, respond to, and resolve difficult interactions that can stem from individual and cultural differences. This involves learning, understanding, and appreciating the uniqueness each individual brings to the organization. The objectives of the program are to learn the benefits of mutual respect in the workplace, to learn the importance of personal responsibility in promoting respect in the workplace, and to use a model identified as “M.E.E.T.” to help promote a “mutual respect” working environment.

In preparation for the Respect in the Workplace discussion, each employee is given a Diversity Toolkit when they enter the training facility. The Toolkit is filled with items that remind employees to value and promote differences to create a better place to work, explore and acknowledge differences, and encourage respect for each other’s perspectives. An accompanying document offers

an explanation for each item: A key advises employees to unlock the door for open communication, thereby breaking the barrier to prejudice, racism, sexism, and discrimination. A stick of Double Mint gum reminds employees that they are worth twice as much to their organization by eliminating discrimination and harassment.

The program explains that it takes people with common understandings, common skills, and common goals who are willing and able to “meet on common ground” to create an environment that works for everyone. Scenarios are then discussed to address the four steps of the M.E.E.T. model: **M**ake time to discuss, **E**xplore differences, **E**ncourage respect, and **T**ake responsibility.

The program benefits both the employees and their organization. Employees enhance their communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and diversity skills; gain confidence by being better able to handle sensitive issues without shame, blame, or negative stereotyping; increase productivity as a result of communicating with co-workers and less down time due to conflict or tension; develop a sense of pride achieved when employees feel respected by co-workers and the organization; and enhance teamwork—promoting a more open and high performing team. In turn, the organization benefits by retaining top performers, improving productivity, and decreasing complaint activity.

To view the Respect in the Workplace training slide show, visit the VA GCVHCS DM/EEO Web site at http://10.132.30.14/HRM%20Web/Online/EEO/RespectCourse04_files/frame.htm. ■

Q&A: VHA FACES THE FUTURE (continued)

Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin, Acting Under Secretary for Health

Q: How can a more diverse VA workforce—one that reflects the diverse face of America and the American veteran—help VA and VHA better perform their missions, especially since VA medical centers and clinics are located throughout the United States and territories?

Dr. Perlin: VHA and VA enthusiastically support the principles of diversity throughout our Department. We do so not only because the Secretary wants us to, or because it is the right thing to do, but because of the special mission of our Department.

We cannot properly serve the heroes who have defended our nation if we exclude or impede qualified Americans from obtaining positions of leadership within our Department, or if we fail to treat every man and woman in our Department with equal dignity and respect. America’s veterans fought and died for the principles of equal opportunity. It is up to us to ensure those principles are upheld here.

To read the rest of Dr. Perlin’s interview, visit the DM&EEO Web site at <http://www.va.gov/dmeeo>. ■

Diversity@Work

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www.va.gov/dmeeo

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Department of Veterans Affairs
www.va.gov

VA Office of Resolution Management
www.va.gov/orm

VA Office of Human Resources Management and Labor Relations
www.va.gov/ohrm

DM&EEO ONLINE



The mission of the Office of DM&EEO is to provide leadership in creating and sustaining a diverse workplace free of discrimination at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Here's a sampling of online tools that can help you promote the employment of veterans, women, minorities, and people with disabilities:

- ▶ Black History Month Resources
- ▶ Women's History Month Resources
- ▶ Professional and Community Organization Links

2005 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

JANUARY

Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
January 15 (observed January 17)

National Native American Youth Conference

Washington, DC

January 15-21

http://www.nativeyouthalliance.org/nyac/conf_jan_2005.asp

FEBRUARY

Black History Month
February

VISN 1 Minority Veterans Program Informational Training

February 3

Boston, Massachusetts

Contact Shirley Jackson

(617) 705-9410

VISN 1 Asian American and Pacific Islander Roundtable

February 4

Boston, Massachusetts

Contact Shirley Jackson

(617) 705-9410

Lunar New Year

February 9

Pacific Rim 2005 Conference on Disabilities

February 28 & March 1

Waikiki, Hawaii

<http://www.pacrim.hawaii.edu>



Looking Ahead:

MARCH

Women's History Month
March

APRIL

National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic

April 3-8

Aspen, Colorado

National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives, Inc. (NAHFE) Summit VII

April 7-8

Orlando, Florida

For more events, visit www.va.gov/dmeeo and select the Calendar link.